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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I FOR KHOURY-KINCANNON AND INR/NESA FOR HAY

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TAGS: PGOV ECON EAGR ENRG IZ
SUBJECT: KIRKUK FACING WORST WATER SHORTAGE IN TEN YEARS

This is a PRT Kirkuk cable.

¶1. SUMMARY. (SBU) Low precipitation in Lake Dokan's watershed means that Dokan Dam's electrical generation this year likely will be 25 percent less than last year's and Kirkuk faces its most serious water shortage in the last ten years, with a significant impact on farmers in Kirkuk's restive Arab-majority west. Dokan could increase water flow now, but only at the expense of late-summer electrical generation for the KRG. END SUMMARY.

LITTLE PRECIPITATION MEANS LESS ELECTRICITY FOR THE KRG...

¶2. (U) One year ago, the level of Sulaymaniah's Lake Dokan was 499 meters (approximately 55 percent of capacity), close to normal for this time of year. This year, however, it is only 495 meters (45 percent) due to precipitation across the lake's watershed that was only 65 percent of the long-term average. The Dokan Dam, which produces electricity for the northern Iraq grid, cannot generate when the lake level falls below 479 meters. Therefore, to produce electricity for June-August peak season demand, dam managers must ensure that the lake level is high enough at the beginning of the season to sustain generation throughout it. In an average year, Lake Dokan peaks in early June at around 504 meters (70 percent). This year, however, dam engineers expect to achieve only about 500 meters (56 percent) by June 1.

¶3. (SBU) Based on historical data, the PRT Agriculture Advisor estimates that Dokan Dam's electrical generation this year likely will be 25 percent lower than last year's. Moreover, to achieve even the current low lake level, dam managers have reduced outflow at the expense of Kirkuk province's users, who receive water from Dokan via the Dibbis Dam. At Dibbis, the flow from Dokan (plus a smaller, natural flow from the Lesser Zab River) is divided evenly between the channel that serves Kirkuk city municipal and industrial users (including the North Oil Company and affiliated petroleum-sector companies) and the Lesser Zab, which supplies the water and irrigation needs of Kirkuk's agricultural, restive, Arab-majority west.

...AND A SEVERE WATER SHORTAGE IN KIRKUK

¶4. (SBU) Dokan's current daily average output is 25 cubic meters/second. Even with the smaller flow from the Lesser Zab added, the combined flow is not enough to meet Kirkuk's minimum needs. As a result, Kirkuk's municipal users receive 12 hours or less of water per day. Farmers in western Kirkuk are particularly hard hit, as moisture remains inadequate for

both the maturing fall-planted grain crop and spring-planted crops. The PRT agriculture advisor estimates that only 20-25 percent of irrigated crops are getting sufficient water. Arab members of the Kirkuk Provincial Council (PC) and Arab leaders in western Kirkuk have complained to PRT officers that the KRG is holding Lake Dokan's water "hostage" to secure additional electricity supplies from Baghdad and request CF assistance in increasing dam output.

¶5. (SBU) The PRT Agriculture Advisor projects that the average daily outflow from Dokan for the March-May period will be the lowest in the last ten years. He estimates that Dokan could increase daily average outflow now to 45-50 cubic meters/second, but that reducing the lake's peak level to do so would reduce the dam's power generation season by a few days at the end of summer. Heavy rains would ease the situation, but are increasingly unlikely; the rainy season will end soon, if it has not already.

COMMENT: PRAY FOR RAIN

¶6. (SBU) Over the last ten years -- even in dry years -- Dokan daily average output was at least 45-50 cubic meters/second. However, demand for electricity has increased substantially since 2003, and dam management clearly is trying to build a water reserve to maximize electrical generation for the northern Iraq grid later this summer.

¶7. (SBU) Kirkuk has been short of water the last two years, and complaints about it have become routine. This year, however, the pain is worse: Without significant additional

rainfall or an increase in Dokan output soon, Kirkuk faces its most serious water shortage of the last ten years. The Dibbis Dam manager says that Dokan might increase outflow in mid-May. However, according to the PRT Agriculture Advisor, this would come too late for Kirkuk's farmers, who need the water now for their maturing grain crop and spring-planted crops. Recent heavy rains and moderate temperatures mean that fields are still green. However, the lack of water will begin to tell soon, when temperatures rise. Kirkuk's farmers likely will have to get the water they need from wells using pumps powered by scarce and expensive diesel fuel.
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